Interview with [E1]

E = Independent Expert

The following conventions are used in transcription of spoken interviews:

[replacement information in square brackets]

[redacted information in grey in square brackets]

[?] = unintelligible missing word(s); immediately following word = unclear[?]

[#] = redacted numerical information

CAPITALS to signify emphasis in speaking

((Extraneous information in double brackets))

Researcher  
Umm, yeah. So perhaps just to start off with a GENERAL kind of question. As you know, I think I explained a little bit about our project. So we're looking at what the reasons ARE, WHY English is becoming increasingly used at EUROPEAN universities for academic programs, so programs other than, say, English or English literature or these kind of programs. And we've been looking at a few different PLACES. So we started in the Netherlands, I've been looking at Austria and Spain, and someone else is looking at Italy. And then someone else is looking at Turkey and we MAY also get uh Sweden and an Eastern European country, we're hoping.

[E1]

Okay.

Researcher

Yeah. And we also have someone who's working quantitatively on the whole kind of European Higher Education Area. So the CASE studies basically are focused in these countries. So just, yeah, to warm up a little bit, I thought maybe I could ask YOU generally what what YOU think the drivers are of English language academic programs. In your VIEW or in your EXPERIENCE, um specifically for AUSTRIA. Why, why do you think NOW there are, it's becoming increasingly common for programs to be taught in English at universities in Austria?

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah. Now, let me START by citing the REASONS you have on page one in your sheet, which you sent me concerning English as a medium of instruction, and what you say is internationalization is of course ONE reason, but I would specify that, especially for [university name], but I would say also for Austria as a WHOLE is that we used to BE um a REGION, think about the Austria Hungarian Empire, where there were a LOT of mobility and uh ESPECIALLY academic mobility, if you look to to to the [university name], you will see that the inflow of, let me say good BRAINS came from, let me say, the Ukraine, Poland, Turkey, near east, and so on. So so there is not only let me see internationalization in the MODERN sense of the world, but there is somehow a LINK to a traditional academic areas, which played an important ROLE up to the 30s when fascist regimes took over, and Nazi regimes took over and somehow cut cut OFF the various links. And also people then MIGRATED to the United States, who HAD the links and so it is not only internationalization, but it is for example the EFFORT of the [university name] to be more ATTRACTIVE, especially in countries like of of Central Europe and of South East Europe, but ALSO of, let me say of ITALY.

Researcher  
Umm. Umm.

[E1]  
There's a SPECIAL case the Italian universities are under FINANCED, Italian researchers go very much to the West and the United Kingdom. And in PREVIOUS times, actually quite many Italians also went to AUSTRIA, as Austrians went to Italy. But now, for example, it is quite EASY to hire Italian good researchers. And so internationalization is a term which for me has to do let me see too much with the what, let me say AUSTRALIAN universities or AMERICAN universities would do. But there is, let me said, a traditional link to how central Europe FUNCTIONED until the the 30s and we wanted to take up that tradition of course also with looking to the ranking, because we had the feeling if we are QUITE attractive for central Europe as one of the let me say MAIN hosts for research and and higher education, THEN we can also gain with respect to ranking.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
And and for VARIOUS reasons. But this has nothing to do with this universities and higher education. Umm. Young Polish, let me say up to 40, 45, Hungarians, Ukrainians, they no LONGER speak German or French as it used to be in former times. Actually, in these REGIONS, people spoke German quite heavily and also French. For example, Poland was well KNOWN for for a country where French was the FIRST foreign language, not English, but whatever the REASON, Scandinavian countries, Eastern European countries, Southeastern European countries, Italy, English was picked as as as the MAIN language. So it is not so much let me say that we wanted to reach out to ENGLAND, for example, but you wanted to have a stronger position, ESPECIALLY within Central Europe.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
Yeah. So I just wanted to to just come to to two points quickly. EU integration of course plays the role because there's this idea of a European Higher Education Area and European Research and Innovation area. I mean, if you have some questions about that [redacted identifying information]. But so the but EU integration, let me say is is is important, but if you look at for example UKRAINE does not yet participate in EU integration, but [university name] would like to be quite ATTRACTIVE with Ukraine. So EU integration helped a LOT to to to do that process. But I would say it's perhaps neither necessary nor sufficient, as I just indicated, in the case of Ukraine and so on now.

The the other point is of course, and this is not listed in your in your items is RESEARCH. For whatever REASON, but basically this stems back to to the 30s of the last century, RESEARCH in in the sciences in social sciences, also in [subject area] [redacted identifying information], it has ALWAYS been English, so when when you wanted to participate in international research, you you HAD to master English, so that was the reason why I went to study in the United States when I was a student. I went back later on in, in the in the 90s, again and again because research has become the me see an an English undertaking.

[E1]  
OK, so YOU have questions.

Researcher  
So I I have lots of questions. Sorry ((laughing)). No, I'm you know, I'm just thinking your LAST point now when you when you make this relationship with RESEARCH, how do you think that research impacts on actual English language PROGRAMS? For example, if you're a teaching at master’s level or beyond?

[E1]  
Well, we we had the decision in about 15, 20 years ago at the [university name]. And at that time I was still the [governance role]. I was the [governance role] for quite a WHILE, but but it was in my time, and we decided that with respect to bachelor programs, we MAINLY stick to, let me say, the traditional languages. So MOST are taught in, in, in German. SOME are taught in English. Some are also taught in Slavic languages. So it depends very much on on the subject. But basically it with BACHELOR programs we didn't want to reach out to an ENGLISH speaking community; whereas with the MASTER and the especially the PHD education, we want it to be attractive in CENTRAL Europe and and that's the reason why we switched in many programs to ENGLISH. We EVEN passed the law at the Parliament where it says if you give English MASTER courses you can have special REQUIREMENTS select students better than otherwise.

Researcher  
Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting. So I mean, I had come across this CLAUSE in the Universities Act 2002 that you can restrict student numbers and have selective admission requirements in the case that the course is taught in a FOREIGN language. So were you directly INVOLVED in this in the Universities Act 2002.

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah. I was one of the main negotiator. There are quite many formulations in the LAW which was designed by ME.

Researcher  
OK. So you negotiated with with the the-

[E1]  
Because at that time, just to tell you, I was not only the [governance role] of the [university name], but from [2000s] I [role in] the Austrian University Conference.

Researcher  
Right, right, UNIKO?

[E1]  
Is this like you have Universities UK.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
And the that was the reason WHY I was the MAIN negotiator. And so yeah.

Researcher  
Yeah. So, OK, what was the reason, what was the reason then to put this CLAUSE into the University's Act, to be able to restrict student numbers in the case of a foreign language?

[E1]  
No, it's I think it can be easily EXPLAINED. ONE reason is that we have a LONG discussion in Austria to have so-called OPEN universities. This dates back to Humb- to the days of Humboldt.

Researcher  
Umm.

[E1]  
The the point was that was different in the United Kingdom, United States, but there was somehow the HISTORICAL compromise then, if you have in Germany the Abitur, in Austria the Matura, and Switzerland followed, too. So it encompasses the three German speaking countries. If you HAD that, then you had FREE access to the universities.

Researcher  
Umm.

[E1]  
So it was NOT that the universities was allowed to pick students, we had to take ALL who applied and, but this is is something which came out of the Humboldtian tradition, compromises of the 19th century. And when we came now to this article which, this paragraph which you quoted, we had the feeling if you open if you have OPEN access AND offer courses in English, we COULD be overrun by students, for example, [City A], as you know, [City B] is only 40 miles away from [City A], so I don't know, 10,000 [nationality] students would come and study uh, in in at the [university name] because in [country], English is the well known and widespread language. If you offer a course in English then they would come. German is still a BARRIER for them.

So so that's the reason why we had this, we would call it ‘differentia specifica’ that we said if the program is in ENGLISH and basically it is English of course, perhaps in French literature you would have it in French so then you could also have some restriction. But if it's taught in in in the foreign LANGUAGE then we may restrict. So free access is FORMALLY free for everyone but DEFACTO constrained to German speaking people.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
But in the meantime, in about 50% of all study programs, Austrian universities are now allowed to restrict a student.

Researcher  
50%? Now?

[E1]  
Yeah, 50% of the cases about, yeah.

Researcher  
I didn't realize it was so HIGH. I mean, I know you're allowed to restrict it in certain subjects like PSYCHOLOGY because of all the GERMANS coming to study, but-

[E1]  
‘Richtig’ and Medicine and so on.

Researcher  
Are there more restrictions now?

[E1]  
Yeah, but but that changed. So at the TIME, let me say when in about 15 years ago, it was quite less than 50%, but NOW it has increased. So we have now LEGAL restrictions for law study as a LEGAL STUDIES for ECONOMICS umm and CHEMISTRY and so on.

Researcher  
OK, so where did you get this statistic 50% can I ask, so that I can check because-

[E1]  
It's it's, it's difficult to find out the perhaps you should look, the ministry is publishing some things.  
I I could could perhaps refer you to someone in the ministry, who is that.

Researcher  
Yeah, that would be brilliant. Yeah.

[E1]  
Yeah, I know this number, I mean 50% is now and rough ESTIMATE, but but 50% is, is, is so.

Researcher  
I didn't realize it was so HIGH, and because I I'm aware that people actually USE this part of the law to MANAGE resources and to maintain quality because people like teaching smaller classes and being able to select students.

[E1]

Yeah, yeah, yeah ((nodding)).

Researcher

And of course they can't do it with it German courses. So this is one of the DRIVERS that I found an interview of of why some courses are BECOMING taught in English because it's a way to to MANAGE these aspects of teaching as well.

[E1]  
Yeah, but if you look, for example to LAW, which has now restrictions too, a restricted access, this is taught in GERMAN. So you could perhaps see the following in about 15 years ago, 20 years ago, when we came up with this REQUIREMENT that for English taught courses we can, universities are allowed to restrict. But I think in Medicine it was introduced in 2005, Psychology was also 2005, and from then ONWARDS more and more study programs got restricted. If you look into the LAW you will see uh, unfortunately I don't have it now, but you should look in the law, then you will see that now quite many study programs are somehow restricted.

Researcher  
Right, right, right. Umm yeah, so I mean, I'm interested, especially we're interested in the context of educational REFORM by which universities were granted a kind of regulated autonomy, and this practice of steering at a distance that, you know, comes WITH that. So um because you've been so INVOLVED, actually, IN this reform, so I'm, I'm curious, do YOU, do you think there's there's any aspect OF this Universities Act 2002 OTHER aspects that might have CONTRIBUTED towards English becoming more PROLIFIC as as a as course, the language of academic programs?

[E1]  
Yeah, of course the there is, let me say one reason, when universities were controlled up to 2002 quite HEAVILY by the ministry and the parliament, and the ministry and the parliament did not, let me say envisage, uh, let me say the the TRENDS in research and higher education. Uh, so there was still the feeling Austrian universities are, let me say, NATIONAL universities and and, let me say, handing OVER the GOVERNANCE decisions to the universities, of course, FREED the universities from this NATIONAL context and and they moved them into, let me say, more INTERNATIONALIZED, more EUROPEANIZED a setting, giving more freedom to to the universities. So you could argue that this act in 2002 internationalized more Europeanized a SETTING.

[E1]  
So, you could argue that this act in 2002, giving more FREEDOM to the universities, of course, yes, the SPEED of change was increased.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm. Also there is there is a clause on internationalization and mobility in the Universities Act as well, isn't there?

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah, that's right. But but let me stress perhaps ONE point is, of course, ERASMUS contributed to to this process. But the REASON why we changed, for example, study programs from German to mainly English has not so much to do with Erasmus, because of course, the numbers Erasmus numbers for [university name] are quite HIGH.

Researcher  
Umm.

[E1]  
If you take, uh, a outgoing and incoming, there's several thousands uh per YEAR at [university name]. But the main reason why Erasmus was NOT such a driving forces is that there is more HORIZONTAL mobility, not a VERTICAL mobility in the sense that we wanted to have more DEGREE mobility.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm.

[E1]  
And Erasmus is not a DEGREE mobility.

Researcher  
So it's more to do with the ARCHITECTURE of degree study programs, is that what you mean like the Bologna process of changing the architecture to the three cycle degree programs? Is that what you mean?

[E1]  
Yeah. Yeah. So we wanted to go to this three cycle and we wanted to come up with let me say INTERNATIONALLY attractive master and PhD programs.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm.

[E1]  
So Erasmus. But as you know, Erasmus is more at the BACHELOR level.

Researcher  
Yeah, sure, sure. Can I ask, how did this clause on internationalization and mobility come into the Universities Act? Were you involved in this as WELL?

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, I was.

Researcher  
And why why was that actually PUT into the Reform Act?

[E1]  
Yeah, actually the in order to, THAT already started in the 90s. There was a minister in in Austria, Vice Chancellor. His name was Busek, and Busek was very much European minded and he was also warned he was at THAT time also the LEADER of the Conservative Party. And he was he was very let me say DECISIVE in the negotiation talks and, as you know, Austria became a member of the European Union only in 1995 on the 1st of January 1995, and he was Vice Chancellor from, I think 91 to 95. So he was, let me say and and an ARCHITECT in in LEADING Austria to the European Union. The Social Democratic Party was ALSO in favor of membership but not so FERVENTLY as as as Busek was. Now that given the fact that Busek was very much in FAVOR of the European Union and was very EAGER to make Austria a member of the European Union. So in the early 90s, universities were already given some money to to get let me say international OFFICES. So we I think we started with Erasmus BEFORE we became a member of the European Union. So, so internationalization actually goes back to the EFFORTS of the government in the early 90s to become a member of the EU. So Austria opened up at that time.

Researcher  
Yeah, but why did he need to put it into the Reform ACT, though? I mean, why I specifically did you put internationalization and mobility into that?

[E1]  
I I I THINK you know there's certain extent due to these efforts in the early 90s that became a VALUE somehow and and and that was the REASON why we more or less in the university Act 2002 we took over what WAS already fixed in other laws or in other let me say PRACTICES which evolved from the early 90s.

Researcher  
In in Austria, other AUSTRIAN laws you mean?

[E1]  
Yeah. I don't know. Yeah. So so I I just want to say that we actually didn't have quite a LOT of discussions on this point when we NEGOTIATED the University Act 2002 because it was very clear from all sides that this SHOULD be a part.

Researcher  
So can I ask like obviously through the Universities Act 2002 you had this huge big shake up of the university organization and and how it's run and the the governance structures and also through being granted well a quasi autonomy, you also then have these STEERING mechanisms and these steering instruments. So do you think in some way that this kind of process of of steering at a distance and the the governance STRUCTURES and the way it worked at following this university act may have contributed in some way to English language programs. Do you see the LINK there in some way or not so much?

[E1]  
No, I I think I already GAVE you the reasons. The main point was is that the universities now were somehow liberated from NATIONAL, let me say, priorities, they could move more more along academic lines, and GIVEN that research is mainly in English, as I mean in many subjects, research IS in English and given the fact that the universities wanted to become attractive PLACES for students all over Central Europe, Europe and so on. So so that's the REASON why we, why, let me say the new GOVERNANCE of universities uh, of course, TRIGGERED, or let me say STRENGTHENED these processes.

Researcher  
Umm.

[E1]  
But I I remember that I was once INVITED by yeah, I don't know now how that was called by a COMMITTEE in the of of the BRITISH Parliament in 2007. I think you can recall I WAS invited with the Vice Chancellor of the [UK university] to give oral EVIDENCE to a committee about INTERNATIONALIZATION. And interesting for me was, it was that internationalization in the BRITISH context was discussed in a DIFFERENT way as as WE do it here, mainly that in in England internationalization would mean getting Chinese students who pay high FEES, and the IMPLICIT argument was that the DRIVE of autonomous universities to get more funding resulted in accepting Chinese students, which lowered the QUALITY of the universities. That was NOT the case in in let me say in AUSTRIA. When WE discussed internationalization and turning more to become a part of the English speaking higher education and research world, we actually had the feeling this would IMPROVE quality.

Researcher  
Right, right. Yeah.

[E1]  
And for whatever reason, Chinese students wanted to go to Australia, Canada, United Kingdom. But as you can see with the NUMBERS, they wouldn't go to Germany or to France. So we were never LURED by the by the tuition fees of China Chinese students or East Asian students.

Researcher  
Yeah. Well, of course your model of funding is very different.

[E1]  
Pardon me?

Researcher  
Your model of FUNDING is very different, isn't it, um in Austria, because you have these free tuition and or minimal amounts, I mean free tuition for EU students and very LOW tuition for international students.

[E1]  
These [university name] is funded [#]% by GOVERNMENT money.

Researcher  
Right. Yeah, so.

[E1]  
And and the [#]%, MUCH comes from EU sources, and of course, there's a lot of of consulting and so on. TUITION fees as far as I remember, contribute only some percent. In SOME cases you have to pay tuition fees, but tuition fees is is not even [#]% of of the the annual income of a university.

Researcher  
Right, right. So it's VERY different to other countries, isn't it?

[E1]  
Yeah.

Researcher  
So do you think that the, I guess this kind of neoliberalist DRIVE towards economics is OFFSET by the the the SYSTEM in, in, in Austria as well, so um you have, is it LESS driven by money from the teaching side, but you're saying BECAUSE of this drive towards RESEARCH that this also impacts on the English language program?

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah, of COURSE, for example, we wanted to be attractive by, by for, for MONEY from Brussels. So [university name], I think if I'm correct gets a [# to #]% of its money from various grants of the European Commission. So, so, so so this is very important. So if you get money from the government, then money is [?]. There is also some shifts, for example in the Austrian Science Fund, the Austrian SCIENCE Fund, which is quite important for [university name] because [# to #]% of the Austrian Science Fund uh GOES to to [university name], but if you TRY to get funding from the your Austrian Science Fund, you you have to hand in the project description in ENGLISH.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah.

[E1]  
And and the REASON why the Austrian Science Fund turned from a German language to English language has to do with the fact that there are not so many REVIEWERS in the German speaking countries. Then you have REVIEWERS if you use English, this is not only let me say the ENGLISH speaking countries, but if you want to get a reviewer from Italy, you HAVE to hand him a project description in English. And that's the reason that you, the Austrian Science Fund, moved about 20 to 25 years ago to to to this to to this RULE that the project description has to be in English, so this is another reason why, the reason why we didn't want to have German because there are not so many reviewers. There's some something like, if I may say so, an old BOYS network in, in, in, in research evaluations, and and we wanted to BREAK that up and turn more to the, and that's again that English has gained quite a MOMENTUM in research in Austria. EVEN the humanities, if they want to get funding from the Austrian Science Fund, they have to hand in an ENGLISH description of the project.

Researcher  
I mean the people I've talked to have mentioned that actually this, that they have to submit proposals to the Austrian Science Fund in English, but often I think some people have also said that because there's so much fuss around ECR grants and these are the big, prestigious grants. And maybe if they're researching some kind of something LOCAL, something REGIONAL, that you need expertise in German FOR, they've said that the Austrian Science Fund will actually give them funding for, so in some way it kind of OFFSETS this, you know, this DOMINANCE.

[E1]  
Yeah, but you have OTHER fundings for science.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
This is the Austrian Science Fund ONLY goes for excellence.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
And and there is I think no NEED to [?]. Of COURSE there was a discussion when you hand in the proposal, on the I don't know German literature, why you have to to hand in and in in ENGLISH description. And again, I mean the the REVIEWERS will be people who speak German and so on. So there has been some some discussion, but you get OTHER sources of funding. Austrian Science Fund stands for excellence. And if you want to have excellence, you need ENGLISH.

Researcher  
The there's people, for example, I I spoke to administrative staff as well and they mentioned that the big ECR grants when you get a lot of money that you actually, the burden the administrative burden and the costs kind of OFFSET the the the amount of money you get. But then I suppose this is through the BMBWF then that you get through the funding formula then you get more money from the national funding, is that right?

[E1]  
Yeah. Well, Austrian Science Funding is is not so bureaucratic, but EU funding is usually VERY bureaucratic, and they have specific rules, for example, how you should depreciate your, I don't know, the the, the, the, the, the kind of machines you, you ORDER and so on. So THAT'S the reason why [university name], and USING all the the governance, uh, possibility it it HAS. Why we installed, let me say, a FUNDING office for EU projects. So and people are quite happy at [university name] that this office exists. [University name] has I think in the meantime [#] ERC projects so quite MANY. And one of the REASONS is is why people who got already a grant somehow give the ADVICE to the people who APPLY for grants.

Researcher  
Sure. Yeah.

[E1]  
So they are meeting [?], but of course we used the new governance structures in order to be also, let me say better ORGANIZED in order to cater to to these, to to the EU funding.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah. But obviously, even though you have to pay a lot of money and to manage the ECR grant, you will then also get more money from the BMBWF because it's part of this funding formula for the research.

[E1]  
Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There is a certain formula. And I mean, you can have a lot of discussion why I think there are four or five funding sources, which give you extra money from the ministry.

And so if you have an ERC grant, this will count for the research funding of the ministry. We, in Austria, we do not have the practice of the United Kingdom, so we don't have this research assessment exercises. We simply say if you have a grant from the FWF Austrian Science Fund, if you have a grant from the EU, then you will get extra funding. So THIS is already the excellence.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
Doesn't put a lot of bureaucratic burden. But of course there are other, let me say, categories TOO. So if you have more PhD students, you get more funding. And so on.

Researcher  
Yeah. Yeah. When you when you mentioned four or five funding sources, do you mean in ADDITION to the basic funding formula, because they're always additional pots, aren't there? So you have the basic funding FORMULA and that will be calculated, and then you have some additional things. And does that also come through the negotiations when you when you have, say the development plans and then the national development plans, and you negotiate for the PERFORMANCE agreements. Um so this is this separate from the performance agreements, or is this also PART of that process?

[E1]  
No no, this was part of the 2002 University Act that we REQUIRED the university to come up with an we call it ‘Entwicklungsplan’ in the law, which we didn't WANT as as the negotiator to say, this is a STRATEGY plan because we had the feeling if we talk about STRATEGY, the researchers might think we’d become we turned too much NEOLIBERAL. So THAT'S the reason why we called it ‘Entwicklungsplan’.

Researcher  
Yeah, but it is a strategic planning document basically.

[E1]  
But this IS strategic planning, but we just didn't want to CALL it that way because there was so, so much CRITIQUE at that time that we had the feeling we SHOULD be careful with the WORDING of the different things.

Researcher  
OK, alright.

[E1]  
And and that's the reason why we call it ‘Entwicklungsplan’, but the ‘Entwicklungsplan’ is a STRATEGIC plan, and the STRATEGIC planning is then the BASE for the performance agreement.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
And of course, the performance agreement in in when you NEGOTIATE the performance agreement, then the NATIONAL ‘Entwicklungsplan’, the national strategy plan will be taking into account.

Researcher  
Yeah, not since 2 and yeah, since 2015, I think they've published them.

[E1]  
15 yeah, I I I think that this new formula in FINANCING the university was adopted in 2017, 16, 17, but negotiations to go into that direction already started in 2008, 2009, and in THAT time the ministry DECLINED because it had the feeling they the universities only come up with these new formula for financing the universities, because they want to have more money, and but THEN there was the luck in [redacted identifying information]. So he was very much in in, in FAVOR of strengthening the university. At the same time, we had high GROWTH rates, so the Minister of Finance had the feeling OK, we should fund the universities better and so on. This, of course, comes now under PRESSURE, given Corona, the war in the in in, in the Ukraine, and so on. So HOPEFULLY this will persist.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah. Yeah, no, it it's just very complicated when I'm because I've spoken to various different people about the way the, the money, but I understand that in ADDITION to the funding formula, there are also other pots and other ways that INCENTIVIZE, I guess, universities in a certain way.

In what way do you think Austrian public universities are INCENTIVIZED to HAVE English language programs? What would you say?

[E1]  
Well, as I just said, if if you would like to get more money in research, we know we we need to apply for EU grants. We KNOW that this is part of the formula of the MINISTRY to get some extra money for that, we want to strengthen our PhD studies because PhD students, there's a head counting and the head counting of PhD students brings you more money from the the MINISTRY. There are not so many, perhaps good PhD students in Austria, so we need to be internationally, at least for central European countries, ATTRACTIVE. I think there are quite many, if I remember the numbers correctly, in some PhD programs there are MORE than 50% of of of the candidates non-Austrians.

Researcher  
Mm-hmm.

[E1]  
So if you like to STRENGTHEN the PhD program, you HAVE to go international.

Researcher  
Umm. And that brings, I mean it it it brings benefits to the COUNT of PHD's as well from the BMBWF.

[E1]  
That's right, that's right. And in in addition, of course, if you like to be more RESEARCH oriented in the university, you need more PhD students. You need more, I don't know, post docs, and you need more tenure tracks. There is I think the common BELIEF in the university world that you should strengthen YOUNG researchers because this gives you a special IMPETUS.

Researcher  
Yeah, I mean, that's one of the the ‘Systemziele’ in the in the national development plan is the ‘Steigerung’ – I don't, I can't remember what it was – but ‘irgendetwas des Nachwuchses’.

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah. So for example, there WAS, let me say in the OLD days when it came to hiring a professor. If I may be now cynically, we HIRED perhaps a BIG shot, but the big shot had already his productive years behind him or her. What we HAVE to learn, and that's what [university name] tried to DO during the last years is HOW to SCREEN let me say the research potential of YOUNG researchers.

Researcher  
Right.

[E1]  
And if you look for example, I I was on the board in [US university]. Uh, [US university] is HEAVILY relying now on the INFLOW of postdocs from ALL over the world and of the inflow of let me say tenure TRACKS from all over the world.

And if you look to the PhD program, this is true as WELL. So ONE of the big challenges of universities, like [university name], is is HOW to attract, let me say the BIG brains. And and how to SCREEN the research potential of young researchers. But but this of course puts ANOTHER pressure to let me say to to have an an English speaking culture at your university, this must be SUFFICIENTLY strong, otherwise people don't COME.

Researcher  
Yeah, yeah. And can I ask about the master students? So you, you specifically mentioned PhD students and then their being incentivized also from the BMBWF fun- funding per COUNT. Does that apply also to MASTER’S students or not? No.

[E1]  
((Shaking head)) No, master’s students. If you want to get you, you know there is a so-called research FORMULA in order to get some extra money, and there you have to get, I don't know ERC grants, number of PhD students and so on. But BESIDES that research formula there is a formula for education.

Researcher  
Yep.

[E1]  
And in education, there is an a number, another criterion which PRESSES universities. And this is the so-called ECTS points. You need to have ACTIVE students. We call it ‘prüfungsaktive Studierende’ and and and BASICALLY the number of ‘prüfungsaktive Studierende’ and master’s students, of course, you you just want to have them to become ‘prüfungsaktiv’. So TAKING examinations and some because we have these freedom of of of, of STUDYING.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
So that's the REASON why you get some extra money in the education formula when you have uh let me see ‘prüfungsaktive Studierende’, and we measure the ‘Prüfungsaktivität’ by ECTS points.

Researcher  
Yeah. And how does that reflect on English language programs? What is the connection?

[E1]  
Yeah. Let me put it that way. This is an an open issue for for Europe, not only for Austrian universities.

The Bologna process I think has, let me say, has somehow introduced these three cycles. But it when it comes to the second cycle, to the master, it has NOT become clear what a master program should stand for. It could stand for, let me say, a PROFESSIONAL education like Master of Law, Master of Business administration and so on. But it also there are other master programs which stand for, I would say a HIGH level of general education. It I think you've if if how do you call it in in, in, in English you have also let me see this high level general education. But it can also be MASTER programs which introduce students to RESEARCH activities. So that's the reason why we changed the law some years ago, allowing that AFTER the bachelor program you could already enter PhD program, but you have the FIRST year’s somehow a master program, we call it fast track. I don't know whether you have that in England, but for example, in the United States you can have, let me say you can enter PhD program after the Bachelor and if you and and on the WAY to the PhD you MAKE a master. So the PROFILE of master programs are NOT well defined, universities are still not good in conveying CLEAR profiles with respect to master programs, whether they should be-

Researcher  
So why do you want them in English, then? Why would you want an English master’s program?

[E1]  
Yeah, and this is what I just want to SAY. If it's a PROFESSIONAL master program, there are quite many professional master programs where you need English today. Think of Business administration, it's not so clear whether in the professional master program with respect to law, you NEED English, so one should actually have this let me say professional master programs and see how English uh, let me say proceeds or what kind of role English has with respect to the general education at the high level I don't know how that stands with respect to English. What IS however, very clear if it's a fast track towards the PhD. If it's a master program which should LEAD into research activities that SHOULD be in English.

Researcher  
Umm.

[E1]  
So I I just wanted to say that for me, this is still in an OPEN area where universities have to put EFFORTS in in order to come up with better profiles. For example, I I I was a member of the Board of trustees of [university name] just up to the end of February this year, and my critique again and again was that [university name] is NOT clear enough with respect to what what KIND of master programs they offer. The problem is, is the academic staff is USED to let me say old old types of master programs, TRADITIONAL master programs. But in my view, universities should differentiate their master programs and should give a clearer profile. With this kind of differentiation, when it comes in English.

Researcher  
Can I ask like when I look at the statistics, the Maiworm and Wächter studies when they were looking at English taught programs um in the EU and in the Austria it's got like 2001 it estimated about 0.8% of programs in English, 2007 1.8% of programs and 2014 that has kind of suddenly gone up to 9.4% programs, and NOW in 2021 they’d estimated it at, a different study um Mandel study that they estimated about 21% of masters programs are in English. Are there any kind of EVENTS during this timeline or any kind of triggers or any stimulus why something would suddenly have kind of GROWN in a particular way from your experience having worked in governance throughout these periods?

[E1]  
Well, I I I think that one of the reasons might be to I this is just a guess, I I don't know, but the the problem is that demographic problem. Austrian students’ number do not INCREASE anymore. And if if you want to get to be attractive for students and get more money from the for the government, you have to attract students from other countries. As you can also see from the various statistic, Austrian universities are LEADING the pack with international ratio of internationalization. So the number of students which come from OUTSIDE Austria is, I think, especially high, higher than in Germany, Italy and so on in France. And and and THAT may be the reason, given the demographic situation but becoming more attractive that MORE English programs are offered. This, I think is is the main REASON.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
If we had, let me say GROWING numbers of Austrian students, perhaps you wouldn't have done that. So so universities and as I already indicated if you let me say, if you are a [nationality] student or [nationality] students, [city] is very close. I mean, you have if you take [geographical region], it takes you about five hours DRIVING and you are in [city]. So I think it's it's more difficult for the Austrians to drive to Paris than it is for [nationals from geographical region] to drive to that and so and and and in order to be attractive for these kind of STUDENTS, you have to [?] of course and but given the demographic problem. Then in addition of course the ‘Fachhochschulen’ have rising student numbers, so somehow aggravating the demographic problem for Austrian universities.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
Well, but this is more a guess.

Researcher  
Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything else YOU'D like to say? Did I miss something you think is important or is there anything else you'd like to point out?

[E1]  
No, no, no, I think that is if, if I may say so, there's one, of course, underlying trend in Austria which makes Austrians to reach for English, and this is we have an export ratio of I think 50% now. So if you look at the goods and services which are produced, we got HIGHLY globalized to to a VERY high degree. I mean I think the only Benelux it countries are very globalized, Danish country, and I just wanted to make the MORE you have a globalized economy, the MORE is also society and universities following this trend.

Researcher  
To English?

[E1]  
To English, yeah. But of course we have to see the consequences of the last 2 or 3 years. So we do not know whether this globalization of of the economies will will continue and it it might BE that there is more concentration on let me say the EU area, and of course, given that English is the MOST spoken language in the EU area, as a FIRST foreign language, so English may PERSIST as the dominant language. But but you HAVE to see to the to these economic trends which seem to me IMPORTANT to note, because universities are part of of of SOCIETY, and and and so there are trends which which may perhaps not perhaps REVERSE what you have just quoted, but there may now come and in the area of stagnation.

Researcher  
OK, I I think what's interesting in what you're saying when you talk about the labor market in Austria and you know the experts and I guess the need for English, it’s interesting that there are so FEW BACHELOR’S programs in English. So it's almost as if the principles, the ideology, because when I look at the statistics from 2021 in that that study I told you about, it said that only 4% of bachelors programs at the Austrian public, um I think actually that was the WHOLE higher education sector. So it wasn't only public university was also the universities of applied sciences and teacher colleges of education, possibly also PRIVATE institutions, but anyway it was only 4%. So if if as you were, I'm just wondering to, whether the ideology and this sense of SOCIAL responsibility and um, you know, the the PRINCIPLES of education in Austria somehow OFFSET the LABOR market kind of having those effects on at least at the bachelor level?

[E1]  
Yeah, but I I think the REASON why we don't have so many bachelor programs is in English is has to do with the fact that student MOBILITY, I mean DEGREE mobility of students uh USUALLY occur when you enter the master or the PhD.

Researcher  
Yeah. OK.

[E1]  
And with BACHELOR programs, you have more the horizontal mobility of Erasmus.

Researcher  
Right.

[E1]  
And then, for example, a Spanish student would perhaps come he wants, perhaps, to meet a GERMAN program because he wants to have some knowledge in German too.

Researcher  
Yeah. So what would the effects-

[E1]  
Uh, so and ENGLISH on the other hand is the language already taught in PRIMARY school, so English is, let me say, you grow UP with English. So my my basic feeling was is is that, and and I was responsible for that 15 years ago, for that decision NOT to change the bachelor program so much, but to change the master and PhD programs.

Researcher  
Yeah, sure. Now I'm just trying to, um understand the link you're making to uh, to the export, to the export market and the labor market because, you know, sometimes I might HEAR the argument also in other contexts, such as the Spanish context that I'm looking at, well, you know the the, the the Chamber of Commerce, for example, they're putting pressure on us to to teach English to the students, so they’ll maybe have more English at bachelor’s level. So I was trying to understand the link you are making to the labor market and English provision within the UNIVERSITY sector. So can you just clarify the link again for me because um?

[E1]  
Yeah, you, you, you might be right that perhaps Austria should consider um to enter MORE in or to switch MORE bachelor programs into English in order-

Researcher  
Ohh no, I'm not saying they SHOULD, I'm just I I'm just trying to understand the RELEVANCE of the labour market.

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah, but but you see, there's, is might be perhaps another [?] when I, as the [governance role] in let me say 2005, 2006 wanted to have MORE English programs, there was quite a RESISTANCE within the university to do so. I mean, many of the staff, they CAN speak English, but they could not deliver a COURSE in English, and so I had the feeling if I pressure the university to come up with more English programs, I should do it let me say in a very FOCUSED way. If I had PRESSED the university to come up with bachelor programs in English, I don't know whether I would have remained a [governance role] ((laughing)).

Yeah, you have to see the argument that quite many professors have that they say, we have a German speaking culture, administration is in German, so we need to have somehow a core of of a German speaking culture. And so perhaps I was opportunistic that I had the feeling that um I I CAN somehow CHANGE the culture in master and PhD programs, but I can't change the culture and be in bachelor program, but you might be RIGHT that given the changes in the LABOR market, perhaps it would have been wise also to do more of the bachelor programs. No, no, no ((laughing)).

Researcher  
((laughing)) No, I I wasn't saying that at ALL. I I was just curious what the relationship was BETWEEN the labor market and the Austrian public higher education sector. That's all. But when you say you, you kind of PRESSED for it and what way did you press?

[E1]  
Well, with internal FUNDING.

Researcher  
Well how did you DO that?

[E1]  
YEAH, because, you know, this is part of, the University Act gives a global sum of money to the university, and it’s up to the [governance body] to DISTRIBUTE the money, and with respect to teaching what I did is basically I said, well, if you come up with an English program, you get some EXTRA money ((smiling)).

Researcher  
What's that through the ‘Leistungsvereinbarungen’?

[E1]  
No, no, no. The ‘Leistungsvereinbarung’ is with the ministry, but we call that.

Researcher  
Yeah. Sorry, the ‘Zielvereinbarungen’.

[E1]  
‘Zielvereinbarungen’ is with the various uni- WITHIN the university.

Researcher  
Yeah. So did you use THOSE? Did you use the ‘Zielvereinbarungen’?

[E1]

Yeah, I used, so in in in 2005, 2006, we had BIG fights within the university where the money with respect to teaching should GO. And of course, as the [governance role], I was trying very much to to change, but not to change too much, as you know, that's the old saying, if if the [governance role] wants to change too much, HE will be changed or SHE will be changed.

Researcher  
OK.

[E1]  
So that was my IDEA that it is better for the, in ADDITION to the problem of [university name], at THAT time was and it is still today that we have TOO many BACHELORS students. So [university name], although, want claiming to be a RESEARCH university had NOT sufficient students with respect to master and and PhD students. So when we changed and introduced the Bologna study architecture 2005, 2006 at [university name], it was very clear for me to strengthen the master and PhD program, because we were too much oriented towards BACHELOR programs and in THAT respect, with giving money to attract more master and PhD students, we set up the ENGLISH programs.

Researcher  
Right, right. OK, so so you, you you basically gave the faculty or the units MORE money through the ‘Zielvereinbarungen’, is that right?

[E1]  
The ‘Zielvereinbarung’, yeah, but but the ‘Zielvereinbarung’ is a complicated thing. We give money not only to the departments, we give all the money to this study programs.

Researcher  
Right. OK.

[E1]  
Yeah. And at [university name], you have a so-called [unit role], if you look at it, and the [unit role] gets the money so that the study program can be, let me say can be put into into working. So the STUDY programs would get money directly.

Researcher  
Can I ask, do you do you recall when your first English language program was, I mean NOT related to the subject area like, not English literature, but your first English language academic program, would that have been around that time, because I I've looked at the development plans and I I found them through the Internet Archive, and I I picked out each ONE and I tried to look at how it changed from one development plan to the other and in the earliest one I saw that you were talking about planning with the change to the Bologna architecture to have more and more English language programs, and I was wondering what when, when did the first do you remember or roughly?

[E1]  
Yeah. Well, I I I think it was. I mean quite pretty sure that was in the [discipline]. This probably was in [subject area], or something like that because we are highly internationalized. I know that the [discipline], were actually opposing that very much, the [discipline], [subject area], it could be [subject area] too. I'm I'm not so sure about that.

Researcher  
And that would have been which year do you think roughly?

[E1]  
Well, I think it should be 2005, 2006, 2007.

Researcher  
OK. Umm.

[E1]  
Yeah, these were the years when we implemented the Bologna study architecture because before that it was impossible because with the old diploma studies which encompass bachelor and master programs to change EVERYTHING to English was not possible.

Researcher  
No, no.

[E1]  
But with the Bologna STUDY architecture, given that there were two different cycles between bachelor and master, you could come up with uh let me say, English programs study programs, English master programs, so it must must be I, I don't know, you COULD look there is a, we have let me ((reaching for booklet)), put it in, you have to look into the ‘Entwicklungsplan’ if you would really like to study that, and in the ‘Entwicklungsplan’, there should be ALL study programs.

Researcher  
Yeah. Sure. No, I have. I have, I have the ‘Entwicklungsplan’ and I have I have looked at ALL of them that you've produced since 2005, so yeah.

[E1]  
Yeah.

Researcher  
Yeah.

[E1]  
Yeah, but but I think BEFORE we implemented the Bologna study architecture, perhaps the MIGHT be a PhD program.

Researcher  
Yeah. OK.

[E1]  
Because the PhD was ALWAYS different, but but at the MASTER level, I think that started with the I'm I'm pretty sure on on that.

Researcher  
Yeah, and and that was a DELIBERATE attempt of yours.

[E1]  
Yeah, no, this was that was one of the REASON why also was engaged but heavily in the European discussion because implementing the study architecture Bologna study architecture at [university name] NEEDED a lot of insight. And my engagement at the EUROPEAN level and, as you know, I was in the ministerial conferences, Bologna conferences, was for some years the [role] European University Association. So I I got the insight in order to MEET counter arguments at the within [university name]. OK.

Researcher  
I sorry I I realized I've taken up a lot of your time. Are you OK to can you elaborate a little bit? I'm really interested in how in how your experience within the Bologna process um influenced how you implemented this in Austria.

[E1]  
Yeah. Well, there were, let me say, several FEATURES to that. One was uh, let me say, the QUALITY assessment. As you know the EUA I think up from 2004, 5, 6, I don't remember that precisely, we held with OTHER organizations each year a conference each year on the QUALITY culture. The REASON why we came up with these conferences on QUALITY culture, because we had the FEELING that given the Lisbon recognition agreement and given also that we wanted to have more horizontal and vertical mobility within Europe may, implies that there's TRUST in the various universities system. And in order to CREATE that trust in the different university systems, higher education systems, we TRIED very much in the EUA to ORGANIZE conferences on QUALITY culture in order to make the people AWARE that they should STRIVE for quality. Now, this let me say this DISCUSSION on the quality culture I also USED very much to get implemented in the discussions WITHIN Austria and WITHIN [university name].

Researcher  
And and that related to English language programs, in WHAT way?

[E1]  
I I don't think there is a SPECIFIC point, but one POINT where you can see it is is that we we DEMANDED that there are EXTERNAL evaluations. So accreditation and so on. The EUA ALSO set up at that time a unit to to EVALUATE universities, the UNIVERSITY culture and so on. And then it was ALL done in English. So universities had to come up at least with ENGLISH documentation. So that was one point where I would say this fostered a climate in which English, the importance of English could grow.

So you have to look into these quality, I mean that was ALL done in English, although for example we have in our statutes that we could use EITHER English or French, ONLY English was used. So there was no COMPETITION from the French side ((laughing)). So so this is the QUALITY discussion. With respect to MOBILITY, I think that already existed from Erasmus. Erasmus started in 1987 so, and and but, but this discussion on CREATING trust among European universities was a SPECIFIC effort which I tried very much. There was an a, my [role], the [role], we came from England was [name], I don't know whether you heard his name, [name]. And he SUPPORTED very much the idea that we have to PUSH for a common quality culture in the European higher education area.

Researcher  
Right, right. Can I ask though the specific name?

[E1]  
Yeah. And the quality culture, of course then for example, you would look at how many ECTS points, was was the study courses well documented, what was REQUIRED reading, what was NOT required reading and so so. So this is all all PART of this quality culture.

Researcher  
And specifically about the kind of Bologna architecture that you tried to implement within your university and the way THAT relates to English language programs, how did your how did your role in the EU or the Bologna process inform inform that?

[E1]  
I I I I don't. I didn't understand your question, I think we of of course, I mean, let me say, ALL the documents WERE in English.

Researcher  
Sorry, I mean like the actual programs.

[E1]  
The EUA only produced English documents.

Researcher  
Yeah, sorry. I mean the actual English language academic programs. So for example, you know the when you changed this WITHIN your university, so you had this Bologna architecture with MASTER'S programs and you said you you really PRESSED for English language programs and you said that this was INFORMED by your EXPERIENCE in the EU level.

[E1]  
Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, the the the main point was that the bachelor programs should COMPLY with the various rules. I don't know you there was, I don't know, a Helsinki meeting in 2003, 2004, but it was decided that bachelor programmes should have 180 to 200 and forty ECTS points. That was all not FIXED before that. So at the European level we had to FIX, and what does actually student centered learning mean? So there are documents on that. Then for example, it was quite INTERESTING also a study to find out in various areas that the kind of BOOKS and the kind of KNOWLEDGE you wanted to provide in the various study programs actually was very much in LINE among European universities. So if you uh had a bachelor program in [subject area] at the [university name in Austria] that was not so different from a BACHELOR program in [subject area], let's say, in Denmark or in in in in Holland. And so, so there were STUDIES done in order to find out. And then of course, when we discussed the study program in for bachelors in [subject area], we USED these kind of of studies in order to to make it, let me say, to COMPLY that the program complies with these, let me say, VARIOUS outcomes of this quality discussion.

Researcher  
Right. OK.

[E1]  
No, that was an important point and I think the REASON why [university name] was quite successful in coming up with these programs was is because at THAT time we read very, let me say very much the the English literature on what EVOLVED in Europe as the new study architecture.

Researcher  
Right, right.

[E1]  
Yeah, but QUALITY culture is, is an important feature.

Researcher  
Also for MASTER’S programs?

[E1]  
And I think that this the stress for quality culture INCREASED, let me say the readiness uh to to come up with English, let me say programs, because then perhaps you could make sure that this complies, perhaps even better.

Researcher  
Umm OK.

[E1]  
Yeah, but but this I I think that the these conferences on quality culture of study within study programs has been quite influential. If you look at the participation at that time I think nearly ALL thousand universities of Europe participated in that.

Researcher  
But OK. Umm.

[E1]  
So you only need to to look at the participation list of these conferences.

Researcher  
Right, right. OK, sorry I've taken up SO much of your time ((laughing)).

[E1]  
That is OK.